

Bruce Deegan

Testimony IN SUPPORT of SB 63, the paid sick days bill

Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Bruce Deegan. I am a resident of North Branford, and I'm testifying in strong support of the paid sick days legislation, SB 63.

My family, like many families in today's economy, depends on two incomes to make ends meet. Even so, with three kids, it's not always easy. My wife works more than 40 hours a week, but she doesn't get the benefits that come with many full time jobs. That's because she works part time in three different positions. And in none of those positions does she get paid sick day. That means that when she gets sick, as everyone sometimes does, she has to choose between going to work sick and losing pay. We're not poor, but our budget is tight and can't often afford to miss a day of pay. But it really pains me to see my wife have to go to work sick.

Last year, when I saw my wife go into work with the flu, it broke my heart. But she had no choice. We needed the money, and worse, she would have been penalized at work if she hadn't. And our family's position is all too common.

No one should have to make the choice between their jobs and their health. In this tough economy, working families are hit the hardest – and working people deserve some measure of economic security. Even a few paid sick days a year would allow my wife to take care of herself and provide peace of mind that a single flu wouldn't wreck our family's budget.

Furthermore, when my wife goes to work sick, it's not just her own health she's putting at risk, but also the public health. That's because she, like many workers without paid sick days, works in jobs with a high level of contact with the public. In fact, there are hundreds of thousands of workers in Connecticut without paid sick days who work in grocery stores, restaurants, or as home health aids or school bus drivers that lack a single paid sick day.

I hope we've learned from the H1N1 outbreak last summer. Public health experts and the Center for Disease Control warned everyone to stay home if you were infected with the swine flu, or to keep your child home from school if they caught the virus. But unfortunately, for workers without paid sick days, it's not so easy. People who couldn't afford to miss pay went to work sick. It simply defies comprehension that we haven't fixed this obvious flaw in our public health system.

I hope the legislature will act quickly to pass the paid sick days law to allow workers like my wife the peace of mind and economic security that come from even a few paid sick days and will help protect the public from the unnecessary spread of infectious illnesses.

Thank you.